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ABSTRACT

A review of the counselor's log at one elementary school serving students through the eighth grade indicated that during the fall of the 1990-1991 school year, 55 pupils were referred for negative behavior. Negative behaviors included refusing to obey, constantly causing disruptions, stealing, verbal or physical assaults, withdrawn and uncooperative behavior, and family problems. A practicum was developed to decrease the number of adolescent pupils who exhibited negative behavior and to enhance the students' coping skills. Parents, teachers, high school counselors, and community organizations were to act as change agents. To meet the goals of the practicum, group guidance sessions were designed in collaboration with teachers, high school counselors, administrators, and community agencies. Twelve weekly sessions were held with emphasis on self-esteem, role models, character building, and appropriate behavior. Teacher mentors were used to enhance the program. Data were collected before and after the sessions and were obtained from teacher behavior checklists, interviews, questionnaires, needs assessments, and student self-evaluations. Data analyses revealed that all of the outcomes were achieved. The number of pupils exhibiting negative behavior decreased dramatically. The findings suggest that pupils exhibiting negative behavior can learn better coping skills and that collaboration with parents, teachers, other counselors, and community agencies are key factors in helping adolescents. It appears that group guidance and mentoring are excellent ways to increase and enhance the counseling services provided for adolescents. (NB)

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Improving Negative Behavior In Adolescent Pupils Through Collaborative Initiatives

by

Elvie Rhone

Cluster XLII

A Practicum I Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education.

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1992

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Approved:

March 3, 1992

Date of Final Approval of Report

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Georgianna Lowen. Ed. D.
Adviser

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ABSTRACT

Improving Negative Behavior in Adolescent Pupils Through Collaborative Initiatives. Rhone, Elvie, 1992: Practicum I Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Negative Behavior/Coping Skills/Children's Behavior/Character Building/Behavior Strategies/School Conduct/Group Guidance/Collaborative Initiatives.

The aim of this practicum was to decrease the number of adolescent pupils who exhibited negative behavior. It also attempted to involve others as change agents.

Group guidance sessions were designed in collaboration with teachers, parents, high school counselors, administrators and community agencies. Twelve sessions were held weekly with emphasis on self esteem, role models, character building, and appropriate behavior. Teacher mentors were used to enhance the program. Data was collected before and after the duration of the sessions. Teacher behavior checklists, interviews, questionnaries, needs assessments, and self evaluations were employed.

All of the outcomes were achieved. The number of pupils exhibiting negative behavior decreased drastically. The data from this practicum demonstrated the following: (a) pupils exhibiting negative behavior could learn better coping skills, (b) collaboration with parents, teachers, other counselors and community agencies are key factors in helping adolescents, (c) group guidance and mentoring are excellent ways to increase and enhance the counseling services provided for adolescents.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The work setting is an elementary school in a large metropolitan midwestern city. The school is a uniquely designed structure with arched shaped windows, twenty two classrooms, a multi-use room, library, lunchroom and six well appointed offices. It is constructed around a garden of fruit trees. For 28 years this institution has provided hope for 550 pupils whose living conditions are below standard. It is a high density population in which about 80% of the membership resides in two high rise public housing facilities.

The school serves children from pre-school through grade eight. There are thirty teachers, six teacher aides, two community aides, a principal and a counselor. A nurse, psychologist, social worker and speech therapist provide weekly service to the school and make

the staff have ten years or more of teaching experience and hold Masters Degrees. Additionally, the staff is sixty percent black and forty percent white. The student population is one hundred percent black.

This institution is a Title I school which qualifies it for additional State and Federal aid. Programs at this school include three computer labs, extended day programs, outdoor camping, music, art, health, fine arts, counseling and special education. A lot of emphasis is placed on exposure to activities outside of the immediate area. There is a local school council which is responsible for helping with local decision making regarding the yearly school improvement plan.

The community is over-populated, depressed and often a haven for corruption and high crime. The family structure is disintegrated and plagued by factors that are commonly found in a poverty-stricken area. Some of those factors include (a) divorce, (b) separation, (c) unemployment, (d) mental/physical abuse, (e) imprisonment, (f) early pregnancies, (g) untimely deaths, (h) drugs and (i) other substance abuse. A large majority of the families receive public welfare and is headed by a single parent.

A unique feature of this school/community is the strong desire of a few who make it against all odds. Some of the former students have returned to the school as part of the professional staff and/or in career service positions.

Community agencies are present but are only able to provide a band-aid treatment to the many problems. The programs for the teenagers mostly consist of sports, tutoring and field trips. Overall the social agencies are poorly staffed and under financed which limit their impact on the total population.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is a counselor in the school. She holds two Master's Degrees, one in Guidance and Counseling and one in Educational Administration. She also completed an internship at the local County Hospital. Her experiences include: Instructor at the County School of Nursing; Consultant/Supervisor, County Department of Public Aid; Teacher/Consultant for mathematics textbook, Houghton Mifflin Company; Team Leader for Summer Curriculum Writers-Science Department; Classroom Teacher.

In addition to serving as the counselor at the school, she is the case manager and is part of the

school administrative team.

As an adjunct to having specialized skills and information to offer the pupils, the counselor provides an opportunity for each pupil to have continuous contact with a person with some problems or ideas can be explored and clarified. She is always available to confer with the teachers, parents, community agencies and administrators. Counseling, consulting and coordinating are the vehicles through which the counseling duties are performed. The overall functions of the counselor include: providing continuous guidance and counseling for all pupils, accepting and processing referrals for different needs, disseminating information and consulting with parents, teachers and others. As case manager, the writer is responsible for the entire special education program. About 20% of the school population are involved in special education programs. She also maintains all of the records, provides for transportation and facilitates the computer updates.

The special education pupils have not presented any special behavior problems and have not been singled out as a part of this improvement plan.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Early in the school year, the adolescent pupils' negative behavior escalated to the point where disruptions were impacting on the total school environment. The teachers frequently complained of the pupils' conduct. Some of the descriptions of the exhibited behavior included: (a) insubordination, (b) lethargic, (c) uncooperative, (d) disrespectful and (e) not interested in self improvement. Although the pupils were average by given standards, the written profiles were always negative. Also, verbal and physical assaults against teachers began to increase. On several occasions, some pupils were involved with the possession of a controlled substance. Some of the girls were discovered to be pregnant and the parents of all of the pupils exhibited a high degree of frustration.

The normal procedures of suspensions, parent conferences and enforcing the Pupils' Code of Conduct

were inadequate to deal with such a large scale problem. It was clear that some other strategy was needed to change the negative behavior exhibited by the pupils.

Problem Documentation

The existence of the problem was documented by (a) observations, (b) interviews, (c) needs assessments, (d) counselor's log, (e) self-evaluations, (f) teacher referrals, (g) incident reports and (h) behavior checklists.

A review of the counselor's log indicated that during the fall of the 1990-91 school year, 55 pupils were referred for negative behavior. The negative behavior identified in the referrals included: (a) refusing to obey, (b) constantly causing disruptions, (c) stealing, (d) verbal/physical assaults, (e) withdrawn, and (f) uncooperative and family problems. Twenty-five of these referrals were repeat referrals representing three or more infractions. Note in Table 1, the number of repeat referrals. Also, the total number of pupils involved.

Table 1

Number and Types of Referrals Made to the Counselor

Behavior	Referrals
Refused to obey	5
Constantly causing disruptions	6
Verbally abusive	10
Physically abusive	10*
Withdrawn, uncooperative	10*
Pregnant	3
Controlled substance	5*
Problems with parents	6

* - repeat referrals

During the fall of 1990, the results of the needs assessment completed by the pupils, parents and teachers indicated a need for better pupil self-awareness. The items were rated on a scale of one to ten with one representing the lowest priority. See Table 2 and notice the behaviors identified by the parents, pupils and teachers that are in need of remediation. Notice also the types of behaviors that were assessed and the similarity between the ratings as identified by all of the persons involved in the rating.

An inspection of the self-evaluations that were completed by the students during the fall of 1990 indicated that 50 pupils did not cope well with their problems. The students were asked to rate themselves on several items. Table 3 contains data on how the pupils felt about themselves. One could easily surmise from the ratings that the pupils were not contented with their behavior and recognized that their behavior was inappropriate. This could have also implied that they were ready for some kind of change. The behavior of most concern was how they coped with their problems and controlled their tempers.

Table 2

Mean Number of Pupil Behaviors From Needs Assessments*

Behavior	Teachers na	Pupils nb	Parents nc
Learn how to solve problems	10	10	6
Learn to get along with others.	8	10	8
Understand why one acts the way he/she does.	8	9	8
Get along better with parents and adults.	9	10	10
Learn how to make good choices.	9	10	10

*Top Score = 10

na number of teachers = 5
nb number of pupils = 60
nc number of parents = 23

Table 3

Individual Student Evaluation

Behavior	Number of Pupils*		
	Always	Sometimes	Never
I work hard in school	10	8	42
I join in sports	4	24	32
I am a good leader	5	10	45
I listen well	18	12	30
I follow directions well	10	20	30
I am reliable	5	30	25
I have self control	10	24	26
I share willingly	15	30	15
I lose my temper often	55	2	3
I am a friend to other	20	15	25
I dress neatly	15	5	40
I like myself	10	8	42
I cope with my problems	5	5	50

*Total number of pupils = 60

A review of the incident reports indicated that five pupils were involved with the possession of a controlled substance. Three of these pupils had been involved in similar incidents and had been suspended several times. The parents admitted that they were at a loss as to how to handle these students. Numerous conferences were held with the pupils before they were referred to the counselor. See Table 4 and note the nature of the behavior recorded. These behaviors were considered extreme and many times warranted suspensions and other types of interventions. The area indicated by "refused to participate in class", represented strong resistance to authority.

The results of the student behavior checklist completed in December, 1990 indicated that the pupils had (a) difficulty relating to adults, (b) poor peer relations and (c) difficulty in controlling their tempers. The teachers completed this checklist for each child in the upper department. The teachers' frustration can be gleaned from the type of behavior noted in Table 5. Additionally, it could be noted that the teachers were having a hard time trying to teach and maintain the proper classroom decorum. The behaviors that were targeted included: (a) difficulty controlling

temper most of the time, (b) difficulty relating to others and (c) aggressive, acting out behavior (physically/verbally). Notice the number of pupils who were exhibiting these behaviors.

Table 4

Number and Behavior of Written Incident Reports*

Behavior	Number of Reports
Physically abusive toward adults	12
Serious verbal abuse involving adults	3
Cheating, lying	10
Stealing	13
Serious parental problems	4
Serious disruptive behavior	5
Refused to participate in class most of the time	8
Often depressed	6
Involved with a controlled substance (suspended)	5

*Reports written 9/90 to 12/90

Table 5

Number of Pupils Exhibiting Negative Behavior As Identified by Teachers

Behavior	Number of Pupils*
Difficulty controlling temper most of the time	55
Aggressive, acting out behavior (physically/verbally)	42
Difficulty relating to adults	42
Poor peer relations	40
Appears unhappy or often depressed	39
Over reacts to stressful situations (fearful, crying, worrying)	38

* = Total number of pupils = 60

In February, 1991 during the routine interviews in preparation for high school, it was discovered that three girls were pregnant. The girls imparted to the counselor that they had not given any thought to the consequences of their actions and had no plan as to how to handle their situation. Parent conferences were held only to find that the parents were ill prepared to handle the problem.

Five teachers filed reports during the fall of 1990, which indicated that they had been the victim of verbal/physical assaults involving several pupils. Three of these pupils had had problems before in other phases of their lives.

Overall the negative behavior of the students created a situation whereby the instructional program was interrupted too often. It became a widespread concern of the entire faculty. These boys and girls did not fit into any category of special education and had to be treated as regular pupils. The usual discipline procedures were inadequate to deal with this type of social/character concern.

Causative Analysis

There were several causes for the problem. The pupils were not prepared to cope with the pressures

encountered in a poverty-stricken public housing facility. They were often faced with substance abuse, and all of the ills of society. The attitude appeared to be a lack of motivation because there is no way out.

Compounded with the living conditions was the problem of inadequate parental supervision. This was many times due to no parent in the home or parents striving so hard to survive that child-rearing was not a top priority. The basic needs of self must be met before one can completely extend himself to another. The self system which is more permanent than all other systems impacts greatly in a family situation.

Another cause of the problem was that the pupils utilized poor strategies in handling conflicts and exhibited poor self-esteem. Pupils who have had poor role models may not have learned how to resolve everyday problems, therefore they develop their own code of ethics. This may also lead to (a) poor self-esteem, (b) a lack of self-worth and (c) relating poorly with others.

Because of the conditions in which the pupils lived and the parenting situation, many pupils had been involved with controlled substances and had had early encounters with the legal authorities. For whatever

reason, some of the pupils were experimenting with survival as they had seen portrayed by others in the immediate environment. In the housing project these pupils encountered substance abuse as a way of life. Just saying no to drugs, may not be enough.

Additionally, a majority of the pupils exhibited (a) poor social skills, (b) depression and (c) poor character development. These factors tend to be somewhat common in pupils who have poor role models, limited exposure and poor living conditions.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The adolescent years have been termed as the most difficult years in the developmental cycle. It is a time when the developing child encounters hormonal changes, strives for independence, moves away from the family and looks for other social attachments. The situation in which a child finds himself can have a positive or negative impact on his behavior and attitude toward life. The school tends to mirror all of the changes that are present in the environment at some point. Collins (1990) states that pupil apathy and indifference is eroding the educational systems. Brandt (1986) indicates that coping in life should be easier for the pupils now than in earlier days but the problem

is that there are so many more ways for children to harm themselves with drugs, cars and sexual activity before they are old enough to understand the dangers. Additionally, he states that they are not made to feel important in the schools. This he states, they are unable to cope with.

Barrett (1990) indicates that coping skills for adolescents should be taught in the schools because today's teenagers are faced with pressures new to this era. Egan (1989) describes an instrument to assess the behavioral coping skills of adolescents. She measured the responses of 47 high-risk pupils with 80% accuracy. Pupils have their own ideas as to what they will do and will not do and are not prepared to cope with a situation when this attitude creates a conflict (Bart, 1990). Mantzicopoulas (1990) studied 120 students employing different strategies for coping with school failure. The four strategies used are positive, defensive, self-blame and mixed. The results indicate that the pupils employing positive action oriented strategies had higher academic achievement and higher self-esteem.

Studies over the years have provided evidence that the environment plays an extremely strong role in how a

person views himself and the world in general. Brooks, Gunn and Warren (1989) declare that social environmental factors play a greater role in pupil behavior than hormonal factors. Cohen (1991) found in two studies of at-risk pupils that social/environmental factors as poverty and family breakdown have a strong effect on pupils ability to cope in school and out of school. Brandt (1986) in a conversation with Comer revealed that the social aspects in the life of minority children are more important than the academic concerns.

Recently, there has been a new focus on stress and depression in children. Suicide in children is a major factor to consider in pupils who are showing signs of stress and/or depression (Smaby, 1990). Weisse (1990), Siebel and Murray (1988) contend that early intervention can prevent suicide by identifying signs of distress. Relieving stress in schools emerges as a major factor in pupils' behavior. Pupils are cooperative and content when they feel good about themselves. Schools must work to create a feeling of belongingness in preventing stress in children (Wayson and Lesley, 1984). Being able to make critical decisions is another factor of stress in children. Elias and Clabby (1988) developed an eight step plan to help pupils of all ages learn to cope

with stress and make informed decisions. They suggest that pupils who can make critical decisions prevent them from becoming problems or just giving up. Acute stress in black children coincides with socio-economic status and behavior (Brandt, 1988). Children who transfer from school to school are also victims of a high degree of stress (Matter, 1988).

Children can learn to cope with stress based on situational constraints and cognitive development (Band, Brotman, Weisse 1990 and Allen 1988). Identifying children who are under stress is a critical issue in a school setting. Shafer (1990), Hart (1991) and Brooks (1990) advocate that counselors should become aware of stress in children as a preventive measure.

Substance abuse in children is another problem area when considering pupils' behavior in a school setting. Viadero (1990) indicates that pupils who are at risk for substance abuse exhibit poor personal and social skills. In a survey of 70 students only two indicated that they approved of smoking but 70% approved of drinking and did not see anything wrong with getting drunk (Sun Times, 1991). This may suggest that children who mature psychologically at an early age are more likely to be at risk as a substance abuser. Teenage abusers and drug

exposed infants tend not to learn many social skills (Viadero 1990 and Wilson 1990).

Some theorists have suggested that teaching values and character development are important tasks of the school (Parker, 1991). Wynne (1986) agrees with Parker and further proclaims that there is a correlation between pupils' values and academic achievement. The increase in single mothers raising families need support due to the many society problems that face teenagers today (Burgos, 1991). Additionally, the National School Board (1987) recognized the need for character development and developed strategies for local districts to use in implementing programs.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this practicum was that the negative behavior of adolescent pupils would be decreased and their coping skills would be enhanced which would help them exhibit positive behavior in school. A secondary goal was to have the parents, teachers, high school counselors and community organizations act as change agents.

Outcomes

1. The average of the behaviors indicating poor self-awareness would be reduced from an average of 8.8 to 2.0. This improvement would be reflected in the needs assessments completed by the parents, teachers and pupils. The needs assessment would be presented before and after the 12 week program.
2. The number of pupils who did not cope well with their everyday problems would be reduced from 50 pupils

to 7 pupils. The self-evaluation was to be completed before and after the program.

3. No pupils would be involved with the possession of a controlled substance. The incident reports would be evaluated before and after the 12 week program.

4. The number of pupils who do not relate well with their peers and adults and control their tempers would be reduced from 55 pupils to 8 pupils. The behavior checklist would be completed by the teachers before and after the 3 month program.

5. No teenage pregnancies would be discovered when the pupils were interviewed at the end of the 12 week program. Parents would be invited to attend the interview and provide input as to the child's behavior.

6. No verbal or physical assaults against teachers would be revealed upon a review of the incident reports. The reports would be evaluated before and after the 3 month program.

Measurement of Outcomes

The counselor's log is a written document of the activity that occurs in the counseling office. It is maintained by the counselor and the counselor's aide. Documentation such as conferences, important phone calls, and all referrals are posted daily. This log is

considered to be extremely important and great care is exercised in posting the information. The entries that were made in this log during the three months of the program were to be tabulated and compared with the referrals made prior to the program implementation. Particular attention was to be given to the number of referrals for negative behavior, student pregnancies and serious incidents involving teachers.

To ascertain a multi-view of the problem, the needs assessment was to be completed by the parents, pupils and teachers. This was to be completed before and after the program. The desired behavior indicated by each group was to be compiled and charted for comparison. The main focus was the pupils' self-awareness. (See Appendix C, D, & E).

All students were to be presented with a self-evaluation before and after the 12 week program. The pupils were to be encouraged to be honest in rating the items in terms of the frequency of the occurrence of the stated behavior. The results of how well they coped with their problems were to be charted for comparison. (See Appendix B).

The incident reports are written documents of serious incidents that occur in the school. They may be

written by the teachers, administrator or counselor and represent the official record of the incident and the action taken. A review of these reports were to be made before and after the program. The results were to be charted and compared. Attention was to be given to the number of assaults on teachers, pupils who were involved with controlled substances and any other behavior pattern.

The behavior checklist was to be completed by the teachers before and after the 12 week program. A chart was to be developed noting the behavior change of how the pupils relate to their peers and adults and how they control their tempers. (See Appendix A).

Informal interviews with the pupils, parents, teachers, administrator, high school counselors and community organizations were to be conducted before and after the 3 month program. The student interview was structured to ascertain as much personal information as possible. A specific thrust was to determine if any of the girls were pregnant. All interviews were to be recorded on index cards. Important notes were to be posted in the counselor's log. The results of these discussions were to be summarized.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGIES

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

Educators, researchers, psychologists and theorists have attempted over the years to define and develop programs that would meet the needs of the adolescent child. It was clear however, that there was no definition and no one program projected as the cure all for this age group. To date, these pupils still pose a problem for those who are charged with the responsibility of preparing this population for future productivity. Boys and girls everywhere share the biological, hormonal and social changes. An added dimension is the increasing number of at-risk pupils who make up the school systems. These pupils are in need of more and better programs to address their concerns. Advisory groups, interdisciplinary teaching teams and school transition programs are some of the interventions that have been recommended (MacIver, 1990).

It is interesting to note at this juncture that

most of the programs implemented to attack the various adolescent problems, including drug programs tend to include two areas: development of appropriate social skills and self-esteem. The National School Board (1987) called for a renewed interest in teaching character education in the public schools. Wynne (1988) advocates character development as a vital component of the elementary school program.

Other intervention strategies that have been suggested include teaching social ethics instead of focusing on the behavior (Molnar, 1990). Berman (1990) agrees that the mission of the schools should be to help pupils cope with their feelings and become socially responsible. On the other hand, it has been projected that the adolescent years have been overstated. The pupils are only in need of understanding and a change in the mindset of the teachers (Dorman, Lipsitz and Verner, 1985).

Stress and depression have been identified as major factors in behavior. The literature points to developing programs to identify distress and destructive behavior early and provide intervention (Seibel and Murray, 1988). Keat (1990) agrees with this solution but suggests that counselors should serve as the change

agents. Rathron (1991) recommends guidance units taught by counselors and Durbin (1982) suggests multimodal group sessions.

The Special Person week during various intervals of the school year has been used successfully to develop self-awareness and self-esteem (Bundy and Poppen, 1991).

In general, all of the programs place a premium on developing activities whereby students can improve their self-worth. Kohn (1991) promotes this idea and further declares that pupils should be involved in a program where they can help others as a means of improving their own self-esteem. Resnik (1988) promotes the Quest program which involves group sessions with activities based on self-esteem and basic social development.

Changing a behavior does not happen by accident. It has been well established that to change a behavior requires a concerted effort on the part of the person who desires to make the change. He must also see a need for the change and some personal benefit. All of the interventions make the assumption that the pupil is willing and desires a change in his behavior. Could this be a major factor as to why some programs are not adequate to bring about a change?

It becomes increasingly clear from the literature

that a combination of strategies would be needed to improve the existing problem. Group and individual guidance, change of teacher mindset, parental involvement, good models and character development are some of the suggestions that could work in the writer's workplace.

Description and Justification for Solution Selected

The solution strategy selected was group guidance with a collaboration focus. Specifically, the program consisted of individual counseling by the counselor and teacher mentors and group guidance led by the counselor in collaboration with others. The teachers, parents, administrator, high school counselors and community organizations were involved as presenters and observers.

The seventh and eighth grade pupils were scheduled for one 40 minute period of group guidance per week for 12 weeks. Each pupil met with the counselor for an entrance interview and parents were invited to attend. Ten teachers were invited to serve as teacher mentors for 5 to 10 pupils. The pupils were selected by the teacher or assigned by the counselor.

One unique feature of the program was the collaboration with community organizations. This feature was a needed component because those

organizations could provide first hand knowledge of the community, used a hands on approach to dealing with community problems, were role models for the pupils and they were abreast of current local and federal research occurring in the community. An added factor was to include the community in solving the problems in the school setting.

The group guidance approach has been used successfully with adolescents and was highly recommended for counselors. Individual counseling by the counselor and the teacher mentors was a necessary component to allow for greater self-expression and to clarify ideas and values. Most importantly, it was a vehicle to make the teacher more sensitive to the pupils' needs.

Parents were the greatest asset in developing a change in the behavior of the pupils. They were needed to reinforce, encourage and better understand the plight of their developing teenager.

The high school counselors were needed to help the pupils develop motivation to change negative behavior by understanding future stress factors and how to deal with them now in preparation for high school.

The administrator was an important person for this program because he represented the authority in the

school.

Overall there were five solution stages to this program.

1. Twelve group guidance sessions were conducted by the counselor to address strategies that led to good coping skills which were needed to develop positive behavior. Community organizations were invited to serve as presenters, provide materials and other assistance.
2. Ten teachers were invited to serve as teacher mentors.
3. Ten minutes of each session focused on self-esteem as a means of getting along better with others.
4. The school administrator attended five sessions.
5. Each pupil was scheduled for two conferences with the counselor and as many as needed with the teacher mentor.

Report of Action Taken

The action phase of this practicum began with the writing of a proposal to help defray the cost of the Character Education kits that were to be used to supplement this practicum.

In September, 1991 after laying the foundations for this practicum, the solution strategy was launched. This however, included receiving approval from Nova and

meeting with the building administrator to solicit his support and approval. The meeting with the administrator involved a verbal overview of the entire format and providing him with a written copy for his perusal. It was mutually agreed that this program was a needed component for the adolescent pupils. A tentative schedule was developed to fit in with the departmental organization currently in use. The teachers were asked to put up bulletin boards using the character education focus. Additionally, the writer met with the teachers informally and asked for their support and participation. All of the teachers served as presenters using their own expertise, materials and creativity. The administrators were invited to attend each session and to serve as presenters. Teachers who were not involved with the regular instruction of the targeted pupils were asked to serve as mentors.

Those teachers serving as mentors were given an index card with the names, addresses and phone numbers of the pupils they were to work with. No formal structure was involved with the mentoring phase except to contact the parent and let them know that teachers were volunteering to work with their children. Each mentor was encouraged to meet with the pupils weekly.

A lot of energy and time was spent with the next phase of securing the appropriate community agencies to present on various topics and provide materials. This activity involved many telephone calls and in some cases, letters had to be sent.

The logistics of a meeting place, a final calendar of events and meeting with various community agencies were the greatest challenges.

After securing and providing for all of the necessities, the writer met with the pupils and parents. Each pupil was encouraged to explore his/her ideas and concerns with the writer and/or mentor. Individual and small group conferences were held with the pupils as needed.

The first step of the actual implementation of the solution strategy was an orientation and introduction to the program. A full overview and the calendar of events were presented at this time. The entire staff involved in the program along with the administrators made brief remarks in terms of expectations. The pupils were invited to keep a log if they desired. This aspect was not structured or monitored.

The second step of the solution strategy was to introduce the pupils to ways to cope with stress. Two

high school counselors discussed academic and social stress often encountered in high school. A feature that was unplanned emerged. The high school counselors persuaded the high school administrator to provide a bus for the pupils to take a tour of the high school facilities.

The third step of the solution strategy was to explore stress in relationship to various factors in the community. Two speakers from the local Urban League presented facts and figures about crime, drugs and education of the residents. The pupils were involved in stress management techniques, an added component presented by the staff from the local hospital. They were also encouraged to become critical thinkers when faced with certain situations.

The fourth, fifth and sixth solution strategies focused on substance abuse. Various community agencies participated in these sessions. Each of the sessions were filled with appropriate role models, videos, slides, handouts and statistical information of abuse in the immediate area. A policeman conducted the sixth session and provided displays and documentations to impact on the adolescents of the importance of "saying no" to drugs. The parents and teachers served as

resource persons. At each session, a teacher along with the counselor actively participated as co-presenters and backup.

The seventh solution strategy helped the adolescent pupils to identify the effects of substance abuse on self and others. Two teachers, the science teacher and the language arts teacher presented evidence to show how the learning process becomes a factor. A minister discussed what happens when a family is in conflict. There were no religious references made or implied. This person was selected because of his experience in working with families of this nature.

The eighth solution strategy explored the pros and cons of teenage pregnancy. This phase was led by a medical doctor who showed slides and used other visuals to demonstrate that early pregnancies face certain risks. Additionally, sexually transmitted diseases were discussed. Several of the teachers participated in the discussions.

The ninth solution strategy centered around character development. All of the teachers, counselor and administrators discussed appropriate behavior. The section on decision making and critical thinking from the character education kits were used. The teachers

also provided follow up activities in the classroom.

The tenth solution strategy was a continuation of character development. A teacher wrote and produced a skit demonstrating appropriate behavior in various situations. An instructor from the local university assisted with this presentation.

The eleventh solution strategy dealt with character development and value clarification. Appropriate lessons from the character education kits were used. An open non-threating environment was at last created and the pupils were actively involved in seeking answers to their questions. A staff person from the city department of human relation was a presenter.

The final solution strategy focused on evaluation and wrap up activities. The students were given a chance to give verbal feedback on their experiences. Also, the local high school presented a musical concert.

Practicum Notes: This practicum utilized the use of a lot of visual and high profile personalities. The use of the following components helped to make it a success:

1. Videos/slides/skit
2. Printed handouts
3. Monthly bulletin boards

4. Cooperation from the community agencies and others

5. Character Education Kits.

It cannot be stressed enough, the importance of full cooperation for a practicum of this nature.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The problem that was the focus of concern in the writer's work setting was that the adolescent pupils were exhibiting negative behavior which impacted on the learning environment. It appeared that the pupils were not equipped to cope with their conditions. The problem had begun to escalate due to inadequate strategies to deal with conflict and no interventions were apparent. In the interim, the pupils developed their own code of conduct which did not necessarily include respect for self and others. This void was reflected in their daily actions and attitudes.

In considering a solution for the problem, many options were explored by the writer. It became obvious that group guidance sessions would be a practical approach. Interviews were conducted with all concerned and weekly guidance sessions in collaboration with teachers, administrators, parents and community agencies

were developed. The thrust of all of the sessions was to (a) present ways of coping with conflict, (b) improve self esteem and, (c) learn appropriate behavior.

The goal of the practicum was to reduce the number of adolescent pupils who were exhibiting negative behavior. A secondary goal was to involve the community, parents and teachers as change agents. Additionally, emphasis was placed on expanding and enhancing the guidance services for the adolescent population.

Well defined outcomes were developed to ascertain the desired goal. The following paragraphs will highlight these outcomes and present the results as recorded in the collected data.

Outcome 1: It was envisioned that the average of the identified behaviors indicating poor self awareness would be reduced from a total mean of 8.8 to a total mean of 2.0. Table 6 contains the results of this outcome. Note the decrease in the mean ratings of the pupils, parents and teachers. The average of "2" in the last column, probably reflects one or two pupils who were identified as having special problems. One was referred for a special evaluation and the other moved and was transferred to his area school.

Table 6

Mean Number of Negative Pupil Behaviors

	Pupils	Parents	Teachers	Over all
1990-1991	8.8	8.4	9.3	8.8
1991-1992	1.5	2.1	2.4	2.0

The data was collected and tabulated for the period during the implementation of the practicum. The teachers tended to rate the pupils from a very critical point of view. This may be explained by the frustration that had soared throughout the building.

Outcome 2: It was projected that the number of pupils who do not cope well with their everyday problems would be reduced from 50 pupils to 7 pupils. Table 7 reflects the results of the number of pupils who were able to cope with their problems after the 12 week program. Notice that there is beginning to show a pattern of improvement as the data is presented. The

"always" and "sometimes", groups may be considered together to get a broad view of the pupils' attitudes. This data was taken from the self evaluations completed by each pupil.

Table 7:

Number of Pupils Able to Cope With Their Problems

	Always	Sometime	Never
1990-1991	5	5	50
1991-1992	41	10	9

Outcome 3: No pupils were to be involved with possession of a controlled substance. The incident reports are reported in Table 8. It is interesting to note that the non-targeted behaviors also showed a decrease.

Table 8

Number of Incident Reports

	1990-91	1991-92
Physical abusive	12	0
Serious verbal abusive with adults	3	1
Cheating, lying	10	1
Stealing	13	1
Serious parental problems	4	0
Disruptive behavior (serious)	5	0
Refused to participate in class	8	1
Often depressed	6	0
Involved with a controlled substance	5	0

Outcome 4: It was projected that the number of pupils who did not relate well with their peers/adults and control their tempers would be decreased from 55 pupils to 8 pupils. The data collected from the Teacher Checklist is presented in Table 9. Note that there is a pattern developing with all of the behaviors: those that were targeted and those that were not.

Table 9

Pupil Behavior Checklist Completed by Teachers

	1990-91	1991-92
Difficulty controlling temper	55	4
Aggressive behavior	42	0
Difficulty relating peer/adults	42	1
Seems unhappy/depressed	39	0
Over reacts to stressful situations	38	0

Outcome 5: During the 12 week program implementation, it was projected that no teenage pregnancies would be apparent or revealed. Table 10 summarizes the referrals to the counselor and the information ascertained during pupil interviews. It is very interesting to note the number of zero recordings.

Table 10

Number of Referrals to the Counselor

	1990-91	1991-92
Refused to obey	5	2
Constantly causing conflict	6	0
Verbally abusive	10	1
Physically abusive	10	0
Pregnant	3	0
Problems with parents	6	0

Outcome 6: Upon implementation and culmination of the 12 week program, it was projected that there would be no verbal or physical abuse toward teachers. A review of the incident reports and the counselors' logs indicate no reports of any kind of abuse toward teachers. Additionally, there were no police reports or any such information revealed during interviews.

Discussion

A large amount of qualitative data has been carefully collected and examined to ascertain the total effectiveness of this practicum. Of the total number of

60 pupils involved in the practicum, most of the pupils demonstrated a visible change in their behavior. Two students were identified as having special problems but later transferred due to relocation of families. A thorough review of each body of information is presented next and will support the fact that all outcomes were achieved.

Table 6 suggests that the pupils, parents and teachers noted a marked improvement in the skills rated. During the 12 week program, the mean of the overall group decreased as expected. There were many factors that contributed to this growth rate. It can best be summarized as cooperation and collaboration with others.

An inspection of Table 7, indicates a significant change in how the pupils felt about their coping skills. It reflects their ability to handle everyday conflict with peers and adults. The 50 pupils who indicated that they were never able to cope with their problems were reduced to 9 pupils. Viewing the "sometimes" and "always" columns collectively, the total was increased to 51 pupils.

Table 8, reflects the total number of incidents reported before and after the implementation of the program. The incident isolated for remediation was the

number of pupils who were involved with a controlled substance. The character education program had a great impact on this area. Additionally, the regular drug program was implemented two months after the implementation of the practicum.

The summary of the behavior checklist which was completed by the teachers before and after the program is presented in Table 9. The projection for this outcome was achieved. The 55 pupils who did not relate well was reduced to 8 pupils. Other behaviors also showed improvement. This could be because of the fact that all of these behaviors overlap and sometimes one may lead into another.

The counselor's log was a life saver. Table 10 only presents the data related directly to this practicum. Interesting enough, there were no pregnancies as projected and the parents appear to be handling their personal problems better. This is just a note in passing and does not compromise the integrity of this practicum.

There were no reports of any physical or verbal assaults against any of the teachers. The aggressive determination on the part of the unit administrator certainly impacted on the success of this outcome.

Also, the character education component played a major role in helping the pupils to sort out their feelings and buffer their anger and frustration.

It is the conclusion of the writer that this practicum involving (a) parents, (b) teachers, (c) high school counselors, (d) active support of the administrator and the (e) community agencies, played the major role in changing the negative behavior. Even more importantly, is the fact that the counseling services were multiplied.

The mentoring phase of this practicum was the most effective, in terms of providing avenues to explore problems and address specific needs of each pupil. Selecting the teachers who served as mentors was an important factor in the success of the entire program. The teachers became personally involved as change agents thereby deriving satisfaction in becoming problem solvers.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended by this writer that this type of guidance program be implemented as a part of the curriculum and should be considered as a preventive strategy to counteract negative behavior often exhibited by adolescents.

2. Another recommendation is to extend the mentoring phase to include more pupils and more staff.

3. Also, a greater effort should be made to get more parents involved in this type of program.

4. Lastly, it is recommended that the teachers, parents and community agencies collaborate in providing on-going programs and services in the schools.

Dissemination

This practicum has been shared with other counselors. The writer will also share the results with the counselors in the central office and educators in general.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT BEHAVIORAL CHECKLIST

STUDENT BEHAVIORAL CHECKLIST

STUDENT_____AGE___GRADE___DATE_____

TEACHER_____SCHOOL_____

Rate the following behaviors as they currently refer to this child using this scale:

1. Rarely 2. Sometimes 3. Often

---

1. _____ Out of seat frequently
2. _____ Short attention span
3. _____ Squirms / fidgets / in seat
4. _____ Disrupts class / demands attention often
5. _____ Daydreams often
6. _____ Difficulty controlling temper most of the time
7. _____ Gives up easily, easily frustrated
8. _____ Shy and withdrawn; does not get involved in class
9. _____ Often talks of aches and pains
10. _____ Aggressive, acting-out behavior (physically/verbally)
11. _____ Little self-confidence
12. _____ Poor peer relations
13. _____ Bizarre, inappropriate behavior

STUDENT BEHAVIORAL CHECKLIST (continued)

14. _____ Seems unhappy or often depressed

15. _____ Lying, cheating or stealing

16. _____ Overreacts to stressful situations (fearful, crying;, worrying without reason)

17. _____ Pupil exhibits . . . of the behavior above

18. _____ Pupil exhibits none of the above behavior

19. _____ Pupil exhibits age appropriate behavior most of the time...well adjusted to environment

APPENDIX B

SELF EVALUATION

SELF- EVALUATION

Directions: Place a check by each item that applies to you. Remember you must be honest.

Name_____ Room _____

	Always	Sometimes	Never
I cope with my problems			
I am a leader in my group			
I listen to the teacher			
I follow directions well			
I am a reliable person			
I have good self control			
I lose my temper			
I like my self			

APPENDIX C

STUDENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

STUDENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Directions: Rate each item that applies to you. You must be honest.
(Use the scale of 1 to 10: one has the lowest value).

I would like help with the following:

learning how to solve my own problems ____

learning to make better decisions ____

learning to get along better with my parents ____

having a chance to talk about my problems ____

feeling less lonely ____

getting along better with adults ____

making friends ____

APPENDIX D

TEACHER NEEDS ASSESSMENT

TEACHER NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Directions: Rate each item that applies.
(Use the scale of 1 to 10: one is the lowest value).

It would be ideal for my pupils to.....

have opportunities to learn how to resolve conflict. ____

learn respect for self and others. ____

learn about problem solving techniques. ____

learn to make informed decisions. ____

learn how feelings affect behavior. ____

develop more self confidence. ____

be better aware of the feelings of others. ____

APPENDIX E

PARENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

PARENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Directions: Rate each item that applies to your child.
(Use the scale of 1 to 10 with one being the lowest in value).

I would like for my child to learn....

how feelings affect behavior. ____

to accept responsibility for his/her actions. ____

to exhibit more self confidence. ____

to listen better in school and at home. ____

to solve his/her own problems. ____

to appreciate who he/she is. ____

to control his/her temper. ____